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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 4 August 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

The Palestinian death toll continues to rise as Israel, the occupying Power, continues to trap, traumatize and terrorize the more than 1.8 million Palestinians living in the besieged Gaza Strip. The tragic and continuous climb in the number of casualties is reflective of the brutality and indiscriminate nature of Israel's ongoing onslaught against the Palestinian population in Occupied Gaza, in grave breach of all norms and rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The list of war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of State terrorism by the occupying Power against the defenceless Palestinian civilians captive under its occupation is growing by the minute. It goes without saying that the Palestinian leadership, on behalf of its people, will exert every possible effort to ensure that those responsible for these heinous crimes are held accountable and brought to justice.

As of today, it is estimated that at least 1,850 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces using all means of lethal weaponry and warfare. The shocking number of those killed includes 402 children, 241 women and 74 elderly persons. This number tragically translates to one Palestinian being killed by the occupying Power every hour during the past 28 days of this aggression. Even more telling of the disregard of Israel for civilian life and its deliberate killing of civilians is the fact that, as at 30 July, at least 76 families had lost three or more family members in the same incident, totalling 407 fatalities. Moreover, more than 9,450 people have been injured, including 2,805 children, 1,823 women and 342 elderly persons, by the Israeli occupying forces. Many of those injured are suffering from permanent disabilities and many have been severely burned, including many children who will have to live the rest of their lives with the physical and permanent memories of the savage brutality of Israel against them.

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The critical shortage of medical equipment and medicines has left many of those injured struggling to survive. According to the United Nations Gaza emergency situation report of 3 August 2014:

> Gaza's medical services and facilities are nearing collapse, with hospitals and clinics overwhelmed. Critical supplies of medicines and disposables are almost depleted and the destruction of power supplies has left hospitals dependent on unreliable backup generators. The status of hospitals and medical facilities as protected objects under international law continues to be violated with more attacks reported ...

This is in addition to the fact that medical officials are now reporting that cases of viral meningitis have increased from 5 to 53 per day, while Israeli attacks are preventing the collection of decomposing bodies, posing further and significant health risks, in addition to the rise of communicable diseases, particularly among the over 200,000 displaced civilians sheltering in schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In addition to the above — and although a seven-hour humanitarian ceasefire was announced unilaterally by the occupying Power after world condemnation of the criminal shelling of yet another UNRWA school that resulted in the killing and injury of more innocent women, men and children — Israel has continued its attacks against Palestinian residential areas in Gaza. According to reports, Israeli occupying forces targeted the home of Al-Bakri family in Al-Shati Camp, killing a young girl, Aseel Al-Bakri, age 8, and injuring another 30 people.

Before moving on to the many other war crimes committed by the occupying Power, the Palestinian leadership wishes to put on record and to join the international community in the strong, unequivocal condemnation of the Israeli missile strike outside a United Nations school in Rafah on Sunday, 3 August. That strike killed at least 10 civilians, including 5 children, and wounded dozens of others, who had been sheltering at the school and were queuing for food rations at the time of the attack. United Nations officials stated that, as in previous times, they had informed the occupying Power of the exact location of the school, where approximately 3,000 Palestinians had sought refuge. In fact, UNRWA officials had informed the occupying Power 33 times in an attempt to prevent it from being bombed, the final time just one hour before the attack. We recognize the statement by the Secretary-General deeming this attack a "moral outrage and a criminal act", as well as the clear position of the State Department of the United States of America in this regard, including the statement that: "The suspicion that militants are operating nearby does not justify strikes that put at risk the lives of so many innocent civilians."

We continue to appeal to the international community for international protection to be provided to the Palestinian civilian population, which in Gaza is living under unbearable, inhumane circumstances, with no clean water, no electricity, shortages of food, medical equipment and supplies, and nowhere being safe from the Israeli onslaught. The humanitarian situation is appalling, with over 485,000 people, almost one quarter of Gaza's population, forcibly displaced and sheltering in UNRWA schools — with more than a quarter of a million people taking refuge in United Nations shelters alone — as well as in mosques, churches and hospitals, places they believe to be safe, but are all in fact areas that continue to be attacked by Israeli occupying forces.

All of the internally displaced are in need of emergency food assistance. Moreover, 1.5 million people not in shelters have no or extremely restricted access to water. There is an urgent need for drinking water and water for domestic use as well as access to sanitation and hygiene articles for the displaced. In its Gaza emergency situation update of 1 August 2014, the United Nations noted that: "The establishment of primary health clinics in shelters, alongside the delivery of multivitamins and antibiotics, is urgently needed to avoid the outbreak of infectious diseases." And today, Gaza is witnessing just that, as insecticides and medicines are needed in Rafah to treat epidemics, such as lice and scabies, which have started to spread in shelters.

Moreover, to date, since 8 July, Israel's war on Gaza has now caused over $5 billion in damage to homes and infrastructure in Gaza. At least 5,510 homes have been completely destroyed, and 30,000 homes partially destroyed, including numerous multistorey buildings. At least 24 medical facilities and 141 schools have been damaged by Israeli shelling. At least six teachers are known to have been killed. Psychological trauma among the Palestinian people continues to rise and there are now 373,000 children who require specialized psychosocial support owing to trauma caused by the death or injury of someone they know or the loss of their home. Of course, the number of those women and men who have had to bury their children and other members of their family or who have witnessed this man-made catastrophe unleashed by the occupying Power and lost basically everything is extremely high and requires immediate attention as well.

In addition to what is mentioned above, below is a list of just a small fraction of the multiple grave violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, since our latest letter of 1 August 2014 (A/ES-10/647-S/2014/563), many of them amounting to war crimes, that we are compelled to convey to you. We will continue to keep you informed of the escalating situation on the ground once information becomes available in order to document more fully these crimes against our people.

3 August 2014:

- Ten members of the Al-Ghoul family, including three children and two women, were killed, and 20 others injured by an Israeli missile attack on their home in Rafah. The dead included a baby who was less than three weeks old
- Eight members of the Najim family were killed, and 30 others wounded, by an Israeli airstrike on a home in the Jabaliya refugee camp. Those who were killed had returned to Jabaliya after the Israeli occupying forces announced on Saturday that residents of northern Gaza could go back to their homes. Among the dead were Bilal Abd al-Karim Najim, Abd al-Karim Najim, Ahmad Abd al-Karim Najim, Raghad Najim and Suha Najim
- The Al-Amal hospital in Khan Yunis was reportedly hit by an Israeli missile

2 August 2014:

- Six members of the Abu Madi family were killed, including four children, when Israeli occupying forces fired a missile into their home in Al-Nuseirat refugee camp

1 August 2014:

- As was mentioned in our letter on 1 August 2014, the Israeli occupying forces killed at least 150 Palestinians (at the time of our letter the number had been 130) and wounded hundreds of others in Gaza after Israel declared the 72-hour humanitarian ceasefire over, which had been set in place after intense international and regional efforts were exerted. At the time, the occupying Power had falsely asserted that an Israeli occupying soldier had been taken as a prisoner of war by Palestinians (he was later declared dead by Israel). In Rafah alone, near where the occupying soldier went missing, at least 123 people were killed, including 30 children and 14 women
- The Israeli occupying forces shelled Al-Najjar hospital in Rafah, forcing the evacuation of patients and staff

There is no doubt that the situation today throughout the occupied State of Palestine, from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, where the occupying Power continues to carry out measures of collective punishment and unleash excessive and indiscriminate force against the Palestinian people, is beyond grave. The Palestinian leadership continues to call for an immediate ceasefire with the aim of bringing an end to the slaughter of our people and an end to this crisis, and therefore a Palestinian delegation travelled to Cairo for talks this past weekend to cement an end to the bloodshed. As of now, however, the Israeli side has refused to attend the talks, remaining intransigent, acting unilaterally and persisting with its war against our people. Yet, the Palestinian side continues to seek a ceasefire and comprehensive solutions to the problems that have for so long plagued Gaza, including the illegal Israeli blockade. Thus, the Palestinian side, on all fronts, has jointly proposed points on the way forward and has presented them to Egyptian and American mediators in Cairo.

The proposal for a ceasefire includes the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the end of the Israeli siege of Gaza and the sustained and regular opening of its border crossings, fishing rights up to 12 nautical miles off Gaza's coast and the release of Palestinian prisoners. In this regard, we call on the international community to exert all efforts for the occupying Power to engage in talks based on the minimum requirements, including respect for international law, that have been proposed by the Palestinian side in order to address concretely the catastrophic situation in Gaza and achieve a permanent and durable ceasefire to end the bloodshed and massacre against the Palestinian people by the occupying Power. If that effort is to succeed, the international community must be ready and willing to then exert all efforts to address the core issues that have for too long gone unaddressed in order to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that today is needed more than ever.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 514 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 1 August 2014 (A/ES-10/647-S/2014/563), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations